



## TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TOM CRADDICK  
SPEAKER

June 16, 2003

Ms. Dawn Richardson  
P. O. Box 91566  
Austin, Texas 78709-1566

Dear Ms. Richardson:

Thank you for your letter regarding House Bill 1921. This legislation was passed by the House on May 8 and by the Senate on the uncontested calendar on May 28. It now is under consideration by the Governor for his final signature.

I know that House Public Health Committee Chair, Representative Jaime Capelo, worked to craft legislation that protected the rights of parents not to be included in the immunization registry, while advancing the issue of improving immunization rates, which is a priority of Governor Perry. I believe that Representative Capelo, along with a number of Republican co-authors worked with other interested parties and Representative Frank Corte to craft legislation that will both work and protect privacy. A number of new, substantial penalty measures were inserted that will penalize the Texas Department of Health and its personnel for disclosure of any unauthorized information and records.

Besides this issue, the legislature also enacted new language regarding the right of parents to object to immunization of their child. New language was inserted into House Bill 2292 which provides a conscientious objector exemption that is stronger than current law as it includes anyone who wishes to use it "for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief." This exemption should assist parents who are subjected to any harassment at schools and day care facilities since a signed notarized state exemption form will not be disputable by officials at these entities as might currently occur.

An additional provision in HB 2292 prohibits any health and human services agency from taking punitive action against a parent for not immunizing their child. Thus, parental decisions will be protected and respected in the future on this issue.

Thank you again for your input during the 78th Legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Craddick".

TOM CRADDICK  
Speaker